

# ***South Carolina Department of Agriculture***

Hugh Weathers, Commissioner

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – September 2, 2008**

## **Conservation Programs Protect Soil, Water, and Wildlife**

COLUMBIA, SC – The deadline to apply for assistance from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for two of its Farm Bill programs is September 30, 2008. NRCS provides financial and technical assistance to help landowners address natural resource concerns, promote environmental quality, and protect wildlife habitat on their property. The cost-share funds are available through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP).

EQIP helps farmers improve production while protecting environmental quality by addressing such concerns as soil erosion and productivity, grazing management, water quality, animal waste, and forestry concerns. EQIP also assists eligible small-scale farmers who have historically not participated in previous programs.

WHIP assists landowners to improve their wildlife habitat or restore natural ecosystems.

To increase your chances of funding, apply by September 30. Producers interested in applying should visit their local USDA Service Center as soon as possible to prepare their applications.

Visit <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/> for more information, including eligibility requirements.

***NOTE: Landowners with existing, active EQIP contracts may be eligible for cost-share assistance to re-establish drought-stricken pasture/haylands. Contact your local USDA Service Center for more info.***

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